

# critical digest

VOL. V No. 7

October 27, 1952

The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

## New York Openings This Week

My Darlin' Aida-Winter Garden, 10/27/52. Robert L. Joseph presents musical play based on Verdi opera, with book and lyrics by Charles Friedman. Dorothy Sarnoff and Elaine Malbin alternate in title role. Cast directed by Friedman includes Howard Jarrett, William Wilderman and William Dillard...Frankie and Johnny-Theatre De Lys, 10/27/52. William De Lys presents his first subscription production at the rebuilt Greenwich Village Theatre. It is an American folk legend by John Huston with Pat Larson, Val duPor and Hilda Taylor. Directed by Don M. Dickenson.

## Digests of Current Reviews - more on back page

Gilbert & Sullivan Company-Hellinger, 10/20/52. Best wishes given to S.M.Chartock American Savoyard company by most of critics, but they agreed that first week's production of The Mikado was slightly on the sleepy side. Ralph Alswang's sets, Peggy Morrison's costumes listed as best U.S. has seen in years. Martyn Green's antics applauded by most, though several thought he should tone down his performance. American-born cast praised for singing well and clearly, but urged to get more in the G&S spirit. Coleman, Mirror, rated new organization finest of its kind in the world. Other critics thought group would develop into a good company with more experience. Watts, Post, complained that Ella Halman was difficult to understand. Major complaint of critics was that actors were merely letting words and music perform, without acting themselves. Surprisingly enough all the N.Y. daily critics admit to being Gilbert & Sullivan fans.

Bernardine-Playhouse, 10/16/52. Mary Chase's new play of youth's problems continues to split the critics. Variety and Billboard reviewers feared that her reporting of youngsters was inaccurate and shallow. General magazine critics were ready to agree that script and acting was uneven, they believed the author's special understanding of youth made play worth while, often charming, sometimes funny. Cast directed by Guthrie McClintic was generally applauded with top praises for John Kerr and Johnny Stewart. Gibbs, New Yorker, found it an extraordinarily funny and endearing piece. Time man called the never seen title character a funny sister of Harvey. WCBS Bill Leonard commented that Chase observes people with a clean accuracy, filled with understanding, sympathy, decency, wit and originality.

The Gambler-Lyceum, 10/15/52. Keating, Cue, joins minority who found Alfred Drake and Edward Eager's adaptation of the Italian play by Ugo Betti interesting. It would be a pity, he pointed out, if the U.S.theatre had no place for such an intensely absorbing, intellectual play. Play is complex, not incomprehensible, Keating summed up. Weekly colleagues disagreed. Gibbs, New Yorker, called it vacant and pretentious art work, while news magazine critics said nothing, the language included, ever came to life. Francis, Billboard, believes that only a few pretentious intellectuals will ever worry about what it is all about.

## News & Notes

Buttrio Square suspended, producers to raise money to reopen...Mr. Pickwick moved to Golden...My Darlin' Aida curtain opening night was at 7:30 P.M...An Evening with Beatrice Lillie run extended at Booth...New Rodgers & Hammerstein musical to debut April 20 in Cleveland...Lonny Chapman to replace Walter Matthau, In Any Language...Matthau to join The Grey Eyed People...Nancy Walker to replace Helen Gallagher, Pal Joey...Gallagher to join Hazel Flagg...Jose Ferrer arrived aboard Queen Mary...Ward Morehouse, WT&S, ill at Lenox Hill Hospital, N.Y..."New Yorker" running two part profile of SRL's John Mason Brown by Herbert Warren Wind.

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' NYC THEATRE INDEX '  
- - - - -

D - Daily

W - Weekly

M - Monthly

B - Broadcast

DT - NY Times  
DH - NY Herald Tribune  
DN - NY News  
DM - NY Mirror  
DC - NY Compass  
DP - NY Post  
DJ - NY Journal American  
DW - NY World Tele-Sun  
DB - Brooklyn Eagle  
DL - L.I.Press

DJC - Journal of Commerce  
DWJ-- Wall Street Journal  
DWW - Women's Wear  
WB - Billboard  
WV - Variety  
WCD - Critical Digest  
WGN - George Jean Nathan  
WWM - Ward Morehouse  
BC - WCBS Leonard  
BL - New Leader, WEVD

WCM - Chr Science Monitor  
WC - Commonweal  
WCU - Cue  
WN - Nation  
WNR - New Republic  
WNS - Newsweek  
WNY - New Yorker  
WSR - Saturday Review  
WT - Time  
MP - Park East

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them not if they think they will be hits. Pro means the critic stated directly that he recommends show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

BEATRICE LILLIE-10/2/52  
BERNARDINE-10/16/52

PROS: 100% RAVE NOTICES

PRO: 13 CON: DP DB DWD DJC DWJ WE WV

NONE: DL WWM BL WCM WC WN WNR MP WSR WGN

THE FOUR POSTER-10/24/51

PRO: 19 CON: DH DP WGM WWM BL WC WNY

NONE: DWJ WN WNR WSR

THE GAMBLER-10/13/52

PRO: DC DWD WNR WCU

CON: 18 NONE: DL WGN WWM WCM WC MP WN WSR

GUYS AND DOLLS-11/24/50

PRO: 29 CON: WN

THE KING AND I-3/29/51

PRO: 29 CON: WN

IN ANY LANGUAGE-10/8/52

PRO: DJ DB WNS WB DWW BC CON: L

NONE: DL WGN BL WCM WSR MP WN WC

THE MALE ANIMAL-4/30/52

PRO: 27 NONE: WGN WNR MP

THE MILLIONAIRESS-10/17/52

PRO: DN DM DP DB DWD DWJ WB

CON: DT DH DW DJ DJC BL WV WNS WT WNY

THE MOON IS BLUE-3/8/51

PRO: 26 CON: WC WGN NONE: WN MP

MRS. McTHING-2/20/52

PRO: 24 CON: DM DJ BC BL WT WGN

PAL JOEY-1/3/52

PRO: 28 CON: BL NONE: WNR

NEW FACES OF 1952-5/16/52

PRO: 25 CON: DP WT WGN NONE: WN WNR

MR. PICKWICK-9/17/52

PRO: 18 CON: DT DP DM DW WWM WV BL WSR WNR

NONE: WC WN MP

POINT OF NO RETURN-12/31/51

PRO: 25 CON: DW BL WN WNR WT

SOUTH PACIFIC-4/7/49

PRO: 29 CON: WT

TIME OF THE CUCKOO-10/15/52

PRO: 15 CON: DH DM DP DW BL WT

NONE: WCD WGN WWM WCM WC WNR WN WSR MP

WISH YOU WERE HERE-6/25/52

PRO: DN DC DB DL DJC WV BL

CON: 16 NONE: DWW WCD WGN WCM WNR MP

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' Off Broadway '  
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Pantomime Art Theatre presents program at Carnegie Recital Hall November 7-8...  
Dramatists Forum presents The Proper Owner, new play by Michael Keith and Lynn Shubert at Amato Theatre October 29-30...And Now I Pray, new play by Cornel Saxon presented at Dan Tatum's Studio Workshop...Peter Cookson and Beatrice Straight may establish off Broadway theatre with professional acting company...Equity Library Theatre planning to book Ah Wilderness and Man and Superman within 100 miles of New York City...Dobbs Ferry Players, N.Y., opens winter stock season November 19...  
Amato Theatre presenting Cavalleria and Pagliaccio week ends...Blackfriars' Guild first production of season Faith and Prudence, new comedy by Lottie Michelson, recommended by O'Connor, Journal American, but panned by Shanley, Times and Gros, Variety.

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' Green Room Department '  
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CRITICS REVIEWED...Playwrights brave enough to review the N.Y. critics' opinions of their productions will be given the space by Pollock, Compass. Point out the hazards -- mental, physical and economic -- Pollock announced that Edmund Beloin co-author of In Any Language, will be first to reply to the reviewers in print.

COLUMN TIPS...Edward G. Robinson and Pat O'Brien may open a chain of drama schools across the country, hears Kilgallen...Oklahoma may be Louis Mayer's first production on "Cinerama" reports Gardner...Three critics called T.N.T. by producers, repeats Winchell, Times, News, Tribune.

"BEST PLAYS" LIST...Chapman, News, has picked for his Dodd, Mead "Best Plays of 1951-52:" Mrs. McThing, I Am A Camera, The Shrike, Barefoot in Athens, The Four Poster, Jane, Venus Observed, Gigi and Remains to be Seen. Out of town reported filed by Norton, Boston Post; Cassidy, Chicago Tribune; Johnson, San Francisco Call Bulletin and Schallert, Los Angeles Times.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Early curtains may be instituted every night of the week in every city but N.Y. and Chicago, reports Hobe, Variety. Idea would be to get young married suburbanites to theatre...Unless the stage aspiring youngster enters a stage door without, figuratively speaking, bowing his head; he'd best not try to go through that door at all, points out Burr, Playbill.

INTERVIEW HI LITES...Berlin audiences laughed more at visual jokes in Porgy and Bess than Broadway audiences did, William Warfield told Hawkins, WT&S...Five years perseverance and work from first idea to opening night by Charles Friedman, My Darlin' Aida adaptor, detailed by McClain, Journal American.

TV NOTES...Circle in Square production of Summer and Smoke to be seen on WOR TV Broadway Theatre this season...Margo Jones planning to put Dallas "Theater '52" on network TV...Cohen, Pittsburgh Post Gazette, starts twice weekly "Conversation Piece" on WDTV, Pittsburgh, with wife...William Saroyan writing six half hour plays for CBS TV "Omnibus" series...Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy considered for leads in TV "Halls of Ivy" series.

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' Theatre News Roundup '  
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Danny Kaye presented with lifetime honorary membership in San Francisco's Drama Critics Council...George Jean Nathan portrait by Nikoi Schattenstein to be exhibited at National Academy of Design...Katharine Hepburn's paintings exhibited at Show Shop... "Drama Desk" host to Beatrice Lillie, Eadie and Rack and Edward Duryea Dowling at first luncheon meeting of N.Y. theatre editors and reporters organization... "Outer Circle" group of out of town drama editors, first meeting of season October 20...Stock Managers Association held annual meeting October 21...Basil Radford, British actor, dead...Mrs. Catherine Chisholm Cushing, playwright of Pollyanna, died.

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' Legit Stuff '  
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Dramatic Workshop and Technical Institute has set up a two year scholarship in honor of Clarence Derwent.



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' Out of Town Tryouts '  
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Two's Company debut in Detroit marked by fainting of Bette Davis revealed star's real talent for broad comedy, praises Tew, Variety. Charles Sherman musical is a bit too long, but otherwise stands up well. Costumes, scenery are beautiful; but no hit songs evidenced...Renault-Barrault Repertory Company opened American tour in Montreal with a program of Moliere and Marivaux. Elegant, classical, show-wise raved Newt, Variety...Confidences by Marivaux was best; company opens four week stand in New York November 12.

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' Digests of Current Reviews '  
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Time of the Cuckoo-Empire, 10/15/52. Weekly appraisers, with but one exception, recommended Arthur Laurentz new play starring Shirley Booth. Time reviewer dissented stating that author has neither feeling, tone or respect for this kind of drama. What should have been a rueful comedy turned into a sentimental drama, he complained. Though critics split on merits of play all agreed that Booth's portrayal is her best work. Dino deLuca in his New York debut also rated plaudits, while Harold Clurman's direction was given its share of praise. Francis, Billboard, and Keating, Cue, had no complaints at all with what they considered an excellent script. Hobe, Variety thought play itself a trifle thin, sometimes synthetic; but star's artful performance made it worth while. Newsweek man thought ending false, but he felt show proves that Booth can do anything and make the audience like it. Gibbs, New Yorker, convinced that diverse complaints about various elements of Walter Fried-Robert Whitehead production mean nothing compared to the wonderful humor, vitality and pathos of the lead.

The Millionairess-Shubert, 10/17/52. Add just one more "pro" to slim minority who have okayed Katharine Hepburn in the Theatre Guild production of Shaw's comedy. Francis, Billboard, admitted along with the majority that the play itself is shallow and not very amusing. But the energy and fire the star puts into the script turns into a three ring circus that shouldn't be missed. Boring, senile play plus monotonous voice of lead were reasons rest panned production. Cyril Ritchard won top honors for trying in cast. Hobe, Variety, noted production will be a financial hit but he personally didn't like it. Keating, Cue, wonders what the advance ballyhoo was about, because it is simply Hepburn up to her old tricks in a play which signifies very little. New Yorker aisle sitter thinks Hepburn made a beaut of a mistake in a shining example of how not to play high comedy. Time critic ready to agree that play is probably one of best every written by an 80 year old, but it is also one of the least satisfactory of GBS' tries.

In Any Language-Cort, 10/8/52. Bentley, New Republic, and George Jean Nathan panned Edward Beloin and Henry Garson's comedy which stars Uta Hagen for two vastly different reasons. Former believes Hagen is a good actress let down by a poor vehicle, while latter considers her a student, rather than a delineator of a given role. Both agreed script was unfunny.

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' Yiddish Theatre '  
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Uncle Sam in Israel, Herman Yablokoff's production at Public Theatre, Second Avenue and Fourth Street, recommended by Rice, Post; Pollock, Compass; Wilken, News; Holl, Variety. Post drama editor tabbed musical best production yet staged there, and an attempt to break mold. New tunes enjoyed by all. Variety man agrees that producer is on right track in making Yiddish theatre more modern. Michael Rosenberg in lead comic role won top praises. Title refers to a Kentucky philanthropist.

